Education
MANITOBA

Volume 5
Number 1
October 2006

Published by School Programs Division (Kindergarten to Grade 12) of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth

Meeting the Unique Needs of Middle Years Learners: A Message from the Minister

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth has embarked on a plan to work in partnership with educators and parents to support the unique needs of Middle Years learners. These young people are at an important stage in their development, with one foot still in childhood and the other approaching adulthood. We can best meet their complex needs when we plan and work together to cultivate their overall development. Meeting the needs of Middle Years learners was a specific area of focus during the past school year and will continue to be a priority.

When we pay particular attention to how we develop programming for Middle Years learners, we can enhance students' engagement with school, foster their independence, and promote their academic, social, emotional, and physical development. Educators who plan appropriate programming for this diverse group of young people have the challenge of taking into account learners who:

- seek validation through relationships
- experience the onset of puberty
- seek autonomy and independence
- are developing a sense of identity, justice, and fairness
- need to understand the relevance of what they learn
- prefer active over passive learning

To promote learning opportunities and educational programming for Middle Years learners, the Department embarked on two initiatives in the 2005–2006 school year: the Middle Years Experiential Learning (MYEL) grant and the Middle Years Assessment Policy.

The MYEL grant was developed to expand and consolidate students' academic skills and knowledge, engage learners more fully with school, foster positive attitudes and behaviours, and help students make a successful transition to high school. The grant provides additional support for existing programming and acts as a catalyst for new initiatives directed to "hands-on, minds-on" learning. Demonstrating their creativity and dedication, Manitoba Middle Years educators have submitted innovative proposals focusing on service education, professional learning, environmental awareness, action research, and the provision of diverse mini-course and field-trip experiences.

The Middle Years Assessment Policy is consistent with provincial classroom-based assessment initiatives described in *Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind*. It is intended to promote academic achievement and student engagement with school through formative assessment practices and to ensure communication of achievement information on key competencies. The policy focuses on assessment of key competencies in mathematics and student engagement in Grade 7 and reading comprehension and expository writing in Grade 8. While the competencies do not represent the full range of curricular outcomes, they have been selected to inform students, parents, and educators at the school, divisional, and provincial levels about key areas of strength and areas of concern. The information will guide decisions on how to provide further support for Middle Years learners.

Teacher support documents, which include assessment information, student exemplars, and sample reporting forms, have been developed to assist with implementation. In addition, regional orientation sessions on the Middle Years Assessment Policy and follow-up workshops focused on teaching and learning in mathematics, reading comprehension, expository writing, and student engagement will be offered over the next two years to support professional learning.

I appreciate the thoughtful contribution of the many educators who participated in the development and piloting of the Middle Years Assessment Policy. Their collaborative spirit and their positive feedback and suggestions are indicative of a shared commitment to enhance learning in the Middle Years.

The Department intends to follow up on Middle Years initiatives over the coming school year. I am confident that by continuing to work together we will ensure that sound educational practices are evident in our schools. Our students deserve no less.

Honourable Peter Bjornson
Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth

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Progress on the Manitoba K-S4 Education Agenda for Student Success

The Manitoba Kindergarten to Senior 4 Education Agenda for Student Success was developed through a series of public meetings in 2001 and 2002. It established public priorities and planned actions for education in Manitoba. This issue of *Education Manitoba* takes a look at what has been accomplished in the intervening four years.

Priority 1: Improving outcomes, especially for less successful learners.

- The first report on student achievement was released in the fall of 2002, and the report is now an annual departmental publication.
- The Department made steady progress on implementing the *Manitoba Special Education Review* (1999), including amended legislation in 2004, regulations and policies in 2005, distribution of several support and policy documents, and extensive professional learning opportunities.
- The Department completed planned actions to increase success for Aboriginal learners and developed an ambitious *Aboriginal Education Action Plan, 2004-2007* (with Manitoba Advanced Education and Training). The Department implemented curriculum changes and strengthened "Aboriginal Perspectives" within its curricular approach.
- English as a second language (ESL)—recently changed to English as an additional language (EAL)—and ethnocultural equity and diversity have been addressed through extensive consultations and development of plans for action.

Priority 2: Strengthening links among schools, families, and communities.

- Much of the work on this priority was accomplished collaboratively with the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils.
- The Department published materials that describe the Manitoba curriculum for parents and the public. Information is available at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/parents/index.html>.
- The Department provided support materials and workshops on effective communication between schools and parents. Conflict resolution was a particular area of focus.
- The Department leads and funds two significant parent-school projects: Building Student Success with Aboriginal Parents and the Community Schools Partnership Initiative.

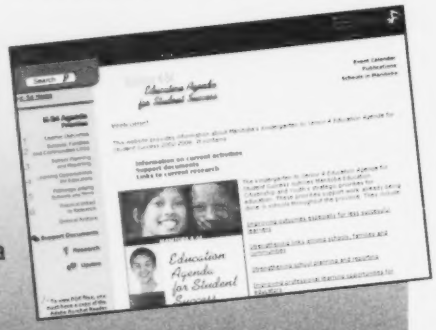
Priority 3: Strengthening school planning and reporting.

- All schools and school divisions report annually to their communities on plans and priorities and provide a summary that informs the Department's own planning process.
- The Department provided extensive professional learning opportunities and a support document.

Priority 4: Improving learning opportunities for educators.

- The Department provided professional learning opportunities on all issues in the Agenda.

Links to Agenda documents and further information are available on the Agenda website at



<www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/agenda>

- The Department developed new formats for professional learning, including online learning communities and the Strategic Technology-Assisted Professional Learning Environment (STAPLE).

Priority 5: Strengthening pathways among secondary schools, post-secondary education, and work.

- The Department developed and distributed an Employability Skills Portfolio.
- Information about and registering of school-initiated courses (SICs) has been improved.
- Secondary and post-secondary education links have been enhanced through joint programming, dual credits, challenge for credit, and increased distance learning opportunities.

Priority 6: Linking policy and practice to research and evidence.

- Research links are connected throughout the Agenda website.
- The Department helped launch the Manitoba Education Research Network (MERN), a unique partnership of faculties of education, educators, and policy makers. MERN offers a website, Manitoba research forums, and linkages across the province (see page 6).

This list of accomplishments shows that it has been a busy and productive four years.

Transition to Grades 9 to 12

In June, the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth announced the reinstatement of the terms Grade 9, 10, 11, 12 to replace the Senior 1, 2, 3, 4 high school designation. New publications and correspondence from the Department already reflect this change. Work on updating the terminology in the K-12 website will continue during this school year, with fall 2007 targeted as the completion date for the transition.

The grade designations used on Educational Information System (EIS) Collection will change, effective fall 2007. Note that course codes for reporting marks, detailed in the *Subject Table Handbook*, will remain the same, as will the Senior Years course designations—for example, Grade 9 Science (10F), Grade 10 Science (20F), Grade 11 Biology (30S), Grade 12 Chemistry (40S).

Parental Involvement in Aboriginal Student Success

Given that Aboriginal people comprise the fastest growing population in Manitoba, a key to the healthy future of our province is success in school for Aboriginal students. The parents and families of these students are encouraged and welcomed to engage fully as partners with schools in their children's educational success. Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth has worked with and sought input from a number of school divisions, Aboriginal educators and community members, and other educational partners in the development of *Helping Your Child Succeed in School: A Guide for Parents and Families of Aboriginal Students.*

This guide includes suggestions related to each grade from Kindergarten to Grade 12 that parents and families of Aboriginal students can use to support their children's learning in school and at home. In addition, the guide provides a list of supportive actions educators in schools can take to engage parents and families in a shared "circle of support" for student success, along with a list of educational partners who can assist parents with involvement in their children's education.

Produced in pamphlet format, the guide has recently been released in English and French. The print versions are accompanied by an audio CD, with the text from the guides narrated in English, French, and two Aboriginal languages (Ojibwe and Cree). The English and French guides can be purchased from the Manitoba Text Book Bureau.

To download the English pamphlet, please visit the Department's website at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/parents/ab_guide/index.html>. The French version can be downloaded from <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/m12/enfdiff/parents_autochtones/index.html>.

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Curriculum Update

Development

Several projects are underway in the 2006-2007 school year to develop new curricula for the Kindergarten to Grade 12 English Program:

- K-4 Arts Education (Music, Dance, Drama, Visual Arts)
- Senior Years English as an Additional Language (EAL) courses
- Psychology
- Grades 11 and 12 Physical Education/Health Education
- Grade 11 Career Development—Life/Work Building and Grade 12 Career Development—Life/Work Transitioning
- Hebrew

Implementation timelines for these projects will be announced at a later date.

Implementation

Implementation is underway in the curricular areas identified in the chart to the right.

Important Notes:

- 30G science curricula were discontinued as of June 2006
- 40G science curricula are to be discontinued as of June 2007
- As part of the transition to ICT: Senior Years, 2007-2008 will be the last school year that schools may offer the following courses: Introductory Keyboarding (15G), Advanced Keyboarding (25G), Computer Applications and Technology (20S), Software Applications (30S), Word Processing (30G), and Advanced Word Processing (45S).

Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment Branch will provide workshops for curriculum implementation and related professional learning during 2006-2007. Information about regional workshops will be posted on the workshop registration system at <www2.edu.gov.mb.ca/yag/>.

For a list of compulsory curricula and stock numbers for ordering from the Manitoba Text Book Bureau, refer to <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/csai.html>.

Implementation Timelines

	Curriculum	Implementation: Voluntary	Implementation: System-Wide
Compulsory	Social Studies: K-4		2006-2007
	Social Studies: 5-9	2006-2007	2007-2008
	Social Studies: 10	2006-2007	2007-2008
	Social Studies: 11	2007-2009	2009-2010
	* Arts Education: K-4	2007-2009	2009-2010
Optional	Social Studies: 12	TBA	TBA
	Interdisciplinary Topics in Science: 12	2006-2007	2007-2008
	Biology: 11		2006-2007
	Biology: 12	2006-2007	2007-2008
	Chemistry: 11		2006-2007
	Chemistry: 12	2006-2007	2007-2008
	Aboriginal Languages: K-12	2006-2008	2008-2009
	Aboriginal Studies: 12	2006-2008	2008-2009
	Family Studies: Senior Years	2006-2007	2007-2008
	Industrial Arts: Senior Years	2006-2008	2009-2010
	English as an Additional Language: K-12	2006-2008	2008-2009
	English Language Arts: EAL for Academic Success: 12	2006-2007	2007-2008
	Ukrainian Language Arts: K-12		2006-2007
	German Language Arts: K-12		2006-2007
	Career Development: 9	2006-2007	2007-2008
	Career Development: 10	2006-2007	2007-2008
	Information and Communication Technology: Senior Years	2006-2008	2008-2009
	Computer Science: 12		2006-2007

** Consultation drafts for K-4 Arts will be available in 2006-2007.*

Technical Vocational Initiative

The Technical Vocational Initiative (TVI), a joint initiative of Manitoba Advanced Education and Training and Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, is now in the third year of its three-year mandate. The central goals of TVI are to revitalize technical vocational education in Manitoba and to create an integrated high-quality education and training system across Manitoba that builds a skilled, knowledgeable, and adaptable workforce.

TVI activities are based on six Pillars of Action:

1. Improve the image of technical vocational careers.
2. Enhance awareness of technical vocational programming.
3. Ensure program relevance to labour market needs.
4. Facilitate programming articulation between high schools and colleges.
5. Develop strategies to address technical vocational teacher currency and shortage issues.
6. Increase funding to support technical vocational equipment upgrades.

Some specific TVI highlights that have a direct impact on schools and colleges are related to support for equipment upgrades, professional development, and Demonstration Project grants. Between April 2004 and May 2006, TVI provided

- $1.85 million for equipment upgrades in schools
- $250,000 for professional development activities and initiatives
- $800,000 to support 47 Demonstration Projects across the province to address one or more of the Action Pillars—Demonstration Projects are carried out by individual schools or consortia of schools, school divisions, colleges, universities, and Adult Learning Centres

In other key activities, TVI

- revised curricula for five program clusters (Automotive Technology, Building Construction, Commercial Food Services, Hairstyling, and Health Care Aide) and reviewed another seven program clusters (Autobody, Welding, Electrical Trades, Electronics, Media, Information Technology, and Drafting) for currency and relevance
- developed program articulation policy and guidelines to be implemented with revised curricula
- hosted the first TVI conference, Challenging the Myth, in March 2006, an event that featured international and national keynote speakers, as well as response panels
- is promoting Essential Skills awareness and application in schools—in May 2006, TVI distributed Essential Skills classroom wall posters to all Middle and Senior Years schools
- is promoting the Senior Years Apprenticeship Option (SYAO) in Senior Years schools

TVI will continue to work with other partners to develop a positive image of trade-related and technical training and to develop a better awareness and understanding of these career-related options for Manitoba youth.

TVI, in collaboration with schools, colleges, universities, and the Apprenticeship Branch, is exploring alternative program delivery options to ensure that students have access to the most up-to-date learning and training options in a timely fashion.

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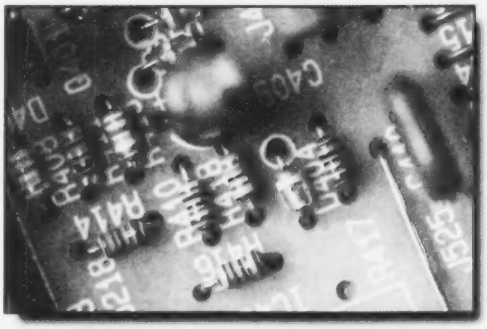
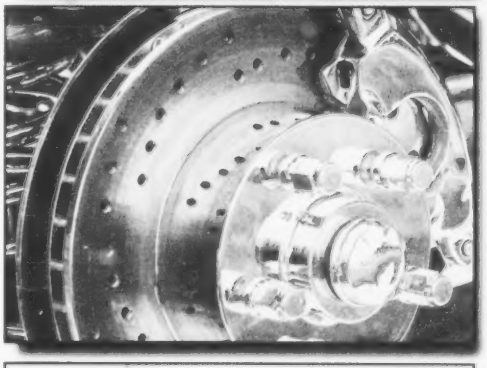
For more detailed information on various TVI activities, please visit the TVI website at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/tvi/>.





Citizenship Education Seminar: Getting Youth Involved

In November 2003, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth added "Citizenship" to its name to emphasize the importance of citizenship education and civic engagement for youth. Since then, MB4Youth has been active in implementing initiatives directed at promoting youth citizenship and in assisting educators to work together to develop strategies for promoting active, responsible citizenship.

Representatives of the Maples Unity Group. Photograph courtesy of MB4Youth. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

In March 2006, MB4Youth, in collaboration with School Programs Division and Bureau de l'éducation française Division, hosted a two-day Citizenship Education Seminar for Social Studies Teachers. Twenty-four teachers from across Manitoba participated and heard more than twenty presenters, many of them youth. Sessions ranged from a panel discussion on defining citizenship education and addressing the challenges of engaging youth, to presentations from classroom teachers and students on existing programs in Manitoba schools that address citizenship education.

This two-day seminar provided educators with ideas and resources to support the implementation of citizenship, which is the core concept of the provincial social studies curriculum. The seminar focus was on Getting Youth Involved in Their Communities. The objectives of the seminar were:

- to enhance teacher understanding of citizenship education
- to empower teacher-participants to promote active, responsible citizenship
- to provide opportunities for networking and for sharing ideas, resources, and methodologies

The Citizenship Education Seminar opened with a panel discussion on youth engagement, featuring Dr. John Wiens, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, Gail Bagnall, Superintendent of Lord Selkirk School Division, and Nicole Sadler, a member of MB4Youth's Youth Advisory Council and second-year student at The University of Winnipeg. The panellists presented their views on what citizenship education should look like and suggested strategies for engaging youth in citizenship, social action, and the democratic process. There was general agreement among the panellists that youth need positive role models, opportunities to participate and to be consulted, and opportunities to learn about and discuss issues relating to local, national, and global issues.

Other sessions at the seminar included presentations from three schools working on Innovations in Citizenship Education projects and two schools with programs directed at promoting respect for human rights in the community and the school. These presentations were well received by participants because of their practical nature and because they were presented by teachers with the assistance of students involved in the programs. The enthusiasm of the students towards their programs demonstrated for teachers that youth care very much about citizenship and that they can make a difference.

Presentations also addressed the views of Aboriginal Manitobans and Franco-Manitobans regarding Canadian citizenship. Building on the history and struggles of Aboriginals and French Canadians in Manitoba, Dr. Fred Shore, from the University of Manitoba, and Louis Allain, from the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, presented educators with their understanding of how these two important groups in our society view citizenship.

Also presented at the seminar were five community-based programs that provide opportunities for youth engagement. Senior Years educators learned about programs and services provided by Lighthouses (an innovative program for youth offered by Manitoba Justice), Shaw United Way Youth Connections Council, Manitoba Youth Volunteer Opportunity Project (MYVOP), and Youth Advisory Manitoba Action Network (YAMAN). Early and Middle Years educators had the opportunity to hear about the GlobalTrek program from Mary-Anna Aaldyk-Doerksen, Project Team Leader of the program.

At the final session, the Honourable Peter Bjornson, Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth, thanked educators for their attendance at this seminar and their commitment to citizenship education. He also unveiled *Youth Making a Difference*, a publication that features 16 stories about Manitoba youth from across the province and their involvement in citizenship projects ranging from local initiatives to global projects. He said that this publication, along with the website (<www.edu.gov.mb.ca/youth/Initiatives/Youth_Stories.html>), is an example of the Department's commitment to providing resources to assist educators in promoting youth citizenship.

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All about MERN

The Manitoba Education Research Network (MERN) is a partnership of people working together to coordinate activities to help link research, policy, and practice. Its purpose is two-fold:

- to increase the synthesis and dissemination of relevant research, done both in faculties of education and in other relevant work, to inform policy and practice throughout the education system
- to facilitate opportunities for education faculty members, departmental staff, and researchers in the field to collaborate on research studies and other activities that advance education research in Manitoba classrooms and schools

MERN has become a province-wide network helping to connect education policy-makers, researchers, and practitioners involved in conducting and using "made in Manitoba" education research. The network continues to evolve based on a shared commitment to improve teaching and learning.

You can become a member of MERN by completing a research profile online at <www.mern.ca>. The website also provides information about MERN research forums, access to the MERN e-messaging service, the *MERN Journal*, and other Manitoba education research projects and activities.

Photograph by Dr. Arnold Novak

MERN relies on the generous contributions of volunteers such as Dr. Thomas MacNeill (left), managing editor of the MERN Journal, *and Dr. Gerald Neufeld, webmaster for the MERN website.*

Beginning with this issue of *Education Manitoba*, MERN is pleased to feature a Manitoba Research Profile, the first one by Evan Janzen Roth and Ralph Mason (see page 7).

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Senior Years ICT

Senior Years Information and Communication Technology: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes provides a resource for teachers implementing Senior Years information and communication technology (ICT) courses. The emphasis of ICT courses is on students learning to solve problems, accomplish tasks, and express creativity. The ICT framework is available online at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ict/framework.html>

Schools may voluntarily implement the courses outlined in the framework during the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. Full implementation will start in the 2008-2009 school year.

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Excellence in Teaching

Manitoba teachers play a vital role in enhancing student learning and achievement. Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth is introducing *Manitoba's Celebration of Excellence in Teaching Awards* to recognize and celebrate the contributions of outstanding teachers throughout the province. The Department encourages you to review the nomination material that was sent to schools, and to submit the names of deserving candidates whose exemplary work helps students to learn and achieve their goals and dreams.

For more information, visit: <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/proflearn/index.html>.

MERN Manitoba Education Research Profile
www.mern.ca
Connecting research in education to policy and practice

Thinking Like Archimedes

Causing learning, studying learning: a glimpse of the classroom

Half of a Grade 9 mathematics class is working in small groups, comparing the area of circles with the area of "radius squares," and wondering about the shape of the graph they have drawn. The other half of the class has covered a circle with a coil of string, and then cut the coil of string along a radius. As students stretch out the cut coil, a triangle appears, with a base as long as the original circle's edge, and a height equal to the circle's radius. But what does that have to do with πR^2? Later, the class will compare their experiences. Then they will write about their inquiries, and either their teacher (Evan Janzen Roth) or "the guy from the university" (Dr. Ralph Mason) will write back to each of them.

> The value of the last seven classes has been that I have really been able to understand circles and the origin of π. Through my different math classes I've only been told that you multiply π by radius squared to get the area. But now I understand why. This has been a great time. (Jessica, Grade 9)

The Research Project

Evan and Ralph's classroom project is an example of *design experiment research*. Design experiments develop and refine curriculum for use by others, and during the developing and refining process the experimenters use research procedures to pursue richer understandings of student learning. Through this project, initiated in 2005, the researchers are developing a unit of instruction for academic students in Senior Years mathematics that enables them to understand mathematical formulas more richly and purposefully. Research data included the students' products from each lesson and interactive writing between the students and the teacher/researchers. Data analysis will enable Evan and Ralph to address a specific research question focusing on how students learn formulas in Senior Years mathematics.

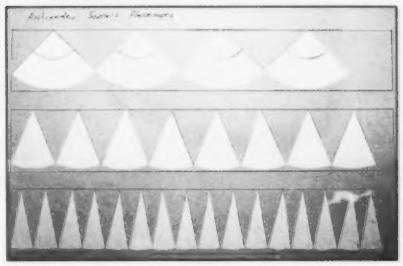
> Doing this research thing, I've had more fun in math than I ever had. I have also learned some new things about squares and circles and graphs. I didn't know before how to compare circles and squares, and tennis balls and tubes. I think learning to draw a hexagon was cool. Now I can draw geo art at home. (Sandra, Grade 9)

The instructional design will continue through three cycles of refinement, but it began with attempting to bring the thinking of Greek mathematician Archimedes about the geometry of the circle into Senior Years mathematics. Over a period of seven classes, students graphed relationships among radius, diameter, circumference, and area of circles. They circumscribed and inscribed regular polygons to approximate π. Readings from historical accounts of the life of Archimedes were interwoven throughout the unit. Overall, the instruction reflects principles of inquiry-oriented learning to make students' engagement with content more thoughtful and rewarding.

> Sometimes it's easier to understand once you've been told what those people did to find out. You can actually find out. (Rayna, Grade 9)

Evan Janzen Roth is a teacher of mathematics at Silver Heights Collegiate in the St. James-Assiniboia School Division. Evan graduated from the University of Manitoba in 2003, winning the Gold Medal for academic achievement in the Faculty of Education. He began teaching in 2003 at Silver Heights and has taught primarily pre-calculus at the school. Evan received a grant to present at the International Institute on Units of Historical Presentation in Science Teaching held in Germany and Hungary. Presenting with Dr. Ralph Mason from the University of Manitoba, this conference laid the foundation for Evan's current research with Dr. Ralph Mason.

In a pivotal experience, students constructed a geometric representation of the calculus-like thinking of Archimedes. This process involved progressively subdividing a circle into more and more sectors, and rearranging the sectors into a rectangle each time (see student work below). Then, as a "thought experiment," students imagined the results if the number of sectors approached infinity and the base of each sector approached the infinitesimal.



A narrative-inquiry process brought to light the different ways in which students approached formulas and pointed to factors that helped students reorient their efforts toward understanding the relationships within the formulas. One clear outcome was an increase in students' ability to explain mathematical concepts through the processes of active inquiry and interactive writing. The students' ability to make sense of formulas as relationships also became apparent.

Evan and Ralph recently returned from the 8th International History, Philosophy and Science Teaching Conference in Leeds, England, and are currently developing an article to share their experiences and research results with others. For providing financial support and more, the researchers are grateful to the Imperial Oil Academy for the Learning of Mathematics, Science, and Technology, the University of Manitoba Faculty of Education, and St. James-Assiniboia School Division.

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Engaging Middle Years Students in Assessment

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River East Transcona School Division is committed to providing its Middle Years students with educational opportunities that are challenging, integrative, and exploratory. Coupled with this commitment is a three-year divisional priority on assessment. In the Middle Years, assessment practices *of* and *for* learning need to reflect individual progress in both the process and products of learning.

At the close of the 2005-2006 school year, Middle Years students at Robert Andrews School and Arthur Day Middle School were engaged in authentic assessment initiatives that enabled them to make decisions and take control of their learning.

At Robert Andrews School, Grades 7 and 8 students immersed themselves in a year-end performance assessment, a two-week experience during which the classroom walls came down and students worked in cross-class teams, collaborating on curriculum-integrated projects. The tasks encouraged students to be actively involved in their own learning and incorporated many of the validated beliefs related to teaching Middle Years students, including cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, multiple intelligences, and integration of technology. The projects were also exciting ways to build school spirit, to promote teamwork, and to allow students to represent their learning in unique ways. Core- and specialist-area teachers worked together to assist students to design projects to show relevant ways in which all learning is interconnected.

Grade 8 student teams were charged with creating a campaign to pitch Winnipeg as the ideal site for the 2012 Summer Olympic Games. The kick-off to this task involved a bus tour of the city and its potential venues—Canad Inns Stadium, CanWest Global Park, and The Forks. Each team then was responsible for completing a variety of tasks, such as making decisions about venues, advertising, infrastructure, accommodation, and cuisine.

Grade 7 student teams role-played positions within a company hired to restore a polluted piece of land to its natural state in the form of a bio-reserve. To activate their thinking, students listened to a presentation by a coordinator from Oak Hammock Marsh on different types of wetlands. They also participated in a one-kilometre walk on a vacant field, which helped them to visualize the size of the area (1 km^2) they were responsible for redeveloping. Their wide-ranging responsibilities included mapping, budgeting, expository writing, and research.

Both projects culminated with students presenting their learning to their teachers and peers. Assessment was tied to curricular outcomes and set out in the form of criterion-referenced rubrics.

Grade 8 students at Arthur Day Middle School participated in year-end exit interviews, which were intended to give students an opportunity to celebrate their Middle Years experiences and to facilitate their transition to Senior Years.

Using display boards, students showcased their academic and personal successes and shared them with a panel of divisional administrators, consultants, and teachers. Additionally, students were able to shine while demonstrating or performing a skill for the same audience.

Following the student presentations, panel members were invited to garner further information about each individual by asking a list of essential questions. Students were given time to reflect on and articulate

- how they learn best (alone, in a group, hands-on)
- what they want their next year's teachers to know about them personally (enjoy a sense of humour, like to read, participate in volunteer work)
- where they see themselves in the future (in a trade, at university)

Throughout this process, students were provided with positive verbal and non-verbal feedback. At the conclusion, they received written comments in the form of two stars and a wish from each panel member. Exit interviews provide a wealth of information for staff at incoming schools.

These River East Transcona schools provide developmentally responsive educational programming and assessment practices that place students at the centre of the learning process. Teachers become facilitators and advisors who help guide these young adolescents towards becoming socially responsible citizens. Students embrace the opportunities to engage actively in their learning. Awesome!

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ISSN 0704-2671

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The newsletter includes articles from the education community and from Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. Signed articles appearing in this magazine express the views of their authors and not necessarily those of the Department.

Distribution:

Education Manitoba is distributed free to schools in Manitoba. This newsletter can be viewed online at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/newsletter/>.

A similar document has been developed by the Bureau de l'éducation française Division for the Français and the French Immersion Programs.

Contact Information:

We invite contributions to *Education Manitoba*. When forwarding submissions, please include your name and telephone number, and send materials in print and electronic formats to:

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We also want to hear what you think about our newsletter. Please send your comments, ideas, and suggestions to the address specified above.

Manitoba

In Celebration of Manitoba's School Libraries

October 23, 2006 is International, National, and Manitoba School Library Day.

This year also marks the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Instructional Resources Unit of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. With the guidance of Myrtle Taylor Lewis, the first Departmental Librarian, this library grew from a single room in the Legislative Building to house the largest collection of education resources in the province.

The IRU's multi-faceted mandate is to provide a foundation for student learning through the provision of resources and services that support curriculum implementation, educational research, and professional learning.

The activities of the IRU focus on educational outcomes: improvement in teaching practices and student learning; the increased use of research and practice to improve decision making in the classroom and in educational administration; and an emphasis on resource-based learning as an educational model in schools.

As we celebrate these milestones, we need to consider the importance of school libraries and their impact on student achievement. A decisive aspect of student achievement is the development of new-century literacy skills. Students develop information literacy through a process of inquiry: planning and questioning, gathering and making sense, producing to show understanding, communicating, and reflecting on their learning.

Throughout the province, school library staff have taken a leadership role in the development of students' information literacy skills. School libraries have much more to celebrate, including their role to provide physical access to print, audio-visual, and electronic databases that meet the diverse learning styles, interests, and abilities of all students. School libraries, through instruction and access, teach students to be independent learners and socially responsible citizens.

Left: Margaret Johnson Memorial Library in 1946

Right: Instructional Resources Unit Library in 2006

The library has grown from a single room in the Legislative Building to the largest collection of education resources in the province.

School Libraries: Active Learning Centres Supporting Traditional and New Literacies

By Sheila Cooper-Simon, teacher-librarian, Louis Riel School Division

At the heart of school libraries is a conversation about how students will achieve literacy through the support of the library program.

Literacy is a rapidly changing concept and, consequently, the role that libraries play is correspondingly fluid. Comprehension and learning through inquiry and resource-based learning in libraries include instruction and assessment using both conventional print and electronic materials. Learning experiences in libraries, much like in the classroom, include an infusion of new literacies alongside traditional literacy.

The overwhelming pervasiveness of information and communication technology (ICT) has led our world to a post-typographic age. The Internet has expanded the library's walls and created a gateway to the largest imaginable library. Reading online has led to rethinking how we view literacy and learning.

The Internet has also introduced a dynamic new learning environment of non-linear, hyperlinked texts and visuals. This invites a paradigm shift in pedagogical approaches, and educators must evaluate how best to equip students with the complex, non-trivial thinking skills they now require.

Recent research suggests that the new literacies "include skills, strategies, and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the rapidly changing information and communication technologies and contexts that continuously emerge in our world and influence all areas of our personal and professional lives…[that]…allow us to identify important questions, locate information, critically evaluate the usefulness of that information, synthesize information to answer those questions, and then communicate the answers to others." There is much to talk about. (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, and Cammack)

New literacies and their relationship to meaningful reading and learning experiences are reflected in two recently published Manitoba developmental continua: *Literacy with ICT* and *Developmental Reading Continuum*. Both documents are tools for assessing learning based on teacher observation, and each provides relevant support to teacher-librarians and teachers working in the library. The descriptors within the documents are particularly useful to teacher-librarians in that they provide a common language to use within school library programs. "[Teacher-librarians] are strategically positioned to work with entire school populations and examine curriculum from a big-picture perspective." (Harada)

All students use the school library in a variety of ways. The strategic position of the teacher-librarian provides a bird's-eye view of student behaviour while reading and constructing meaning in multiple modes. It is important to have a good set of descriptors from which to discuss those observations with colleagues, students, and parents. School library outcomes permeate all Manitoba curricula, much like ICT. It is the shared responsibility of all teaching professionals within Manitoba schools to converse and collaborate to understand "new literacies," including how these literacies are built on traditional concepts of literacy.

For more information, many related resources are available from the Instructional Resources Unit of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth to all Manitoba teachers. See their website at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/iru/>.

Works Cited

Harada, V.H. "Empowering Learning: Fostering Thinking across the Curriculum." *Curriculum Connections through the Library*. Eds. B.K. Stripling and S. Hughes-Hassell. (2003): 41-65.

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